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ASCS BACKGROUND INFORMATION ---- BI No. 6 - February 1971
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FARMER COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

At the State and local levels, the functions and responsibilities of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, as well as those of the Commodity Credit Corporation, are administered by State, county and community Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) committees.

These committees are established in accordance with the provisions of section 8(b) of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1935, as amended.

Committee members are elected by their neighbors. They make local program decisions, and they appoint a county executive director who directs the office staff which does the necessary detailed administrative work. The offices maintained by the committees are the farmers' local contact for business connected with participation in the programs listed below.

Currently, farmer committees administer locally the following programs:*

- (1) Acreage allotments and marketing quotas.
- (2) The Rural Environmental Assistance Program.
- (3) Prior Long-Term Land Retirement Programs under which agreements with farmers have not expired, including the Cropland Adjustment Program, the Cropland Conversion Program and the Conservation Reserve Program.
- (4) The cotton program.
- (5) The disaster feed program.
- (6) The feed grain program.

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*Under Title VIII of the Agricultural Act of 1970, long-term land retirement programs, similar to the prior Cropland Conversion and Greenspan Programs, were authorized for the 1971-73 calendar years. Under Title VIII, payments could not exceed \$10 million annually for each program.

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U.S. Department of Agriculture

- (7) Price support loans and purchases
- (8) The sugar program
- (9) The wheat program
- (10) The wool program
- (11) The CCC storage facilities program.

The committee system administrative line in the field starts with Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) State committees. Under the general supervision of these State committees are some 3,000 elected ASC county committees, each of which is in turn assisted by elected committees in designated local communities.

ASC State committees include from three to five members, appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. In addition, in each State the Director of the Agricultural Extension Service is an ex officio member of the committee.

The State committee is responsible for the administration of farm programs in each State and for general supervision of the work of county committees. Each State committee appoints a State executive director who supervises and directs the work of the State office staff under policies established by the committee.

The ASC county committees -- one in each "agricultural" county -- have three farmer-members, elected by farmer-elected delegates to a county convention. Since 1966, one committeeman is elected each year, with two committeemen being holdovers. The county agricultural extension agent is an ex officio member of the committee, or serves as the committee secretary. However, he does not have committee voting rights in either position.

Alternate county committeemen are elected at the time of the annual committeemen elections. If for any reason a committeeman cannot serve, either temporarily or permanently, the first alternate committeeman serves in his place.

Each ASC county committee employs a county executive director who, for the committee, hires the necessary employees for officework and fieldwork and sees that the day-to-day office and field operations are effectively and efficiently performed. The county committee, however, is responsible for program and administrative policies and decisions at the county level.

To assist the county committee in carrying out program administration, community committees of three farmers each are elected annually by other farmers in each of several local communities within the county. A few counties have only one community area. The designated communities may follow township, school zone, line of subdivision, or natural boundary lines. As in the case of the county committees, alternate community committeemen are also elected at the annual elections -- to serve if one of the regular committeemen cannot.

In general, those eligible to vote in the annual ASC committee elections are persons of legal voting age who have an interest in a farm as owner, tenant, or sharecropper, and who are participating or are eligible to participate in the programs administered by the committees. Those who are not of legal voting age may vote if they are in charge of the operation of a whole farm.

To hold office as a committeeman, a person must be eligible to vote in the committee elections, must reside in the county or community, as the case may be, and must meet certain other minimum requirements designed primarily to insure that political activity is in no way involved in committee decisions or operations.

A total of more than 80,000 farmers serve annually throughout the country as county or community committeemen. They perform a primary function in seeing that the farm programs are practical and appropriate, and that they are administered effectively.